1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

a fearful pride, but soon lose their fear, and try to crowd into the seats; their women, however, are as reluctant to risk entering a car as any old village woman in Cornwall thirty-five years ago. It was a pleasure later in the day to see the bold adventurers of the morning who watched the white man's toilet operations conducting parties of sight-seers into the tent and pantomiming the use of brush, razor and everything there. The Bison-horn Maria is more sophisticated, and will not intrude without being asked, nor is he so curious about small things; but a motor-car is as great a draw to him as to the hill men. Both are very interested in seeing a carburettor stripped and assembled or a tyre changed, or any mechanical repairs; they show quick intelligence, and could soon be taught. In the spate of bridge building on the State roads in recent years they have been quick to grasp methods of sinking piles or getting great beams into position, and have not been slow to offer suggestions that have sometimes been practicable. The newly built road bridge over the Indrawati at Jagdalpur is really built according to the same method as the bridges which even Hill Marias construct across their rivers, with modern and stronger materials and other improvements.

My inquisitiveness about their houses, habits, possessions, agriculture and customs in their eyes must seem much like their curiosity about my ways. Actually their mental processes are not unlike ours, when allowance is made for their centuries of isolation; they are certainly more receptive than the ordinary villager of British India, whose thought has for generations been stunted by the cumbrous wrappings of caste and debased Hinduism. A striking instance of this is the comparative ease with which vaccination was made compulsory years ago throughout the State and is welcomed by the Marias, in strong contrast to the keen opposition to it even in the cities of British India and to the caution venturing on timidity with which provincial Governments make tentative advances in the direction of universal compulsion. Not only is vaccination really universal even in the hill villages, but the Marias are keenly alive to the advantages of inoculation for cholera and yaws, and, in fact, are inclined to demand '*tika*' or inoculation for every ailment, those of them, that is, who have seen for themselves cholera checked or yaws cured by injections; for till recently no medical relief other than vaccination had reached the hills.

In natural cheerfulness few races can surpass the Hill Marias, who, like all Gonds, are quick to see the fun of things, whether it be something that spontaneously appeals to their sense of humour, or a joke put to them by some outsider. Their humour is apt to be broad. Very few serious disputes arise in Abujhmar, where a

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
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Bison Horn Maria

for a tooth; but nowadays this is generally satisfied by invoking the police and the courts. But distances are great in Bastar, and in the rains, when the early hill grains are ripe, communications are bad; often the villagers conspire to hush up a murder or leave it to those affected to take their own direct action, rather than disorganize agricultural work by the troubles of a long police enquiry followed by committal proceedings and a sessions trial. 692

It is a relief to return from this darker side of the Bison-horn Maria's character to the light-heartedness of all Marias, but especially the Hill Maria. An engaging feature of this is his readiness to burlesque himself. A village *gaita* (headman) at Tondawada set the whole camp in fits of laughter by his description of his first vain attempts to use a pair of bullocks in the plough, mimicking himself pulled hither and thither by these wild-cat animals; at Hikul I was treated to a similar comic representation of what would happen if a Maria attempted to milk a cow. They are quick to seize on any foibles or peculiarities of individuals, without respect of persons, and have a happy knack of inventing apposite nicknames; this trait is common throughout the State, where there are nicknames for almost every State official current among all the primitive tribes, while few of the leading Hindu and Mohammedan settlers are referred to by their true names. 157 522 551

Frankness and honesty are still as characteristic as ever of the hill men and the wilder Bison-horn Marias, and many a man arraigned for homicide will state in court perfectly frankly why it was essential to kill his victim and how it was done. I have very seldom found any hesitate to answer any questions, even about the most intimate domestic matters. The Bison-horn Maria, however, being, at least in the open tracts, more sophisticated, is inclined to be suspicious; and he certainly is learning the ways of the courts, and how to defeat a justice administered on the evidence and not according to the facts; many know, for example, that the death penalty may be escaped if you can convince your judge that you murdered your victim because you believed him to be bewitching you. But in general a Maria witness can still be relied upon to speak the truth, although it involve his dearest relatives or himself in trouble; and the occasional pleader from British India is soon hopelessly at sea if he tries his usual methods of cross-examination even on a Bison-horn Maria who knows Halbi. Fortunately, the restoration of the criminal and civil jurisdiction of the village and *pargana* panchayats will considerably reduce Maria experience of the law courts. The Hill Maria never has had much recourse to them, petty theft being almost unknown and murder rare. His attitude may to some extent be gauged by the following example. 157 577 [674] 695

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

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(Verrier Elwin

Bison-horn Maria clown, covered with glistening mud, postures during a dance

[End Plate ZA]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

ORGANIZATION OF THE TRIBE

607

Dewar: O Ange, the gruel is made of broken rice.
Ange: O my Dewar, where are you going today?
Dewar: Today I am not going anywhere
For I have to load my bullocks.
Tomorrow I go to another land to trade.
Ange: I too will go with you to drive the laden bullocks.
Dewar: Don't come with me, for all know how we stand to one another.
Those who do not know us will call us brother and sister.
And when they call us that we shall be ashamed.

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[831]

The relations between *samdhi* and *samdhin* are generally of an amiable, coarse and humorous nature. For men this is a drinking rather than a joking relationship, and all their lives whenever they meet they regard it as an excuse for a bottle. The women, specially as they get older, are more obscene in their conversation. They catch hold of each other's breasts, stick feathers into the private parts and exchange the coarsest jokes.

The place where this joking and fun most commonly occurs is at a marriage. 'There is no purdah in a house of marriage.' Everybody feels free to fool about; no one is going to be offended; everyone is slightly drunk.

V. Summary

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The clan and the family dominate and control Muria social life. Nothing reveals more clearly the extent of this domination than the fact that out of 2000 marriages examined no fewer than 1799 were of the cross-cousin type and, in spite of every temptation to the contrary, 1884 out of 2000 boys married according to their parents' wishes. This could only happen in a society which had a strong regard for its own organization and laws.

The clan system retains its vitality both as an exogamous unit and as a means of organizing its members round the clan-god and the memory of the Departed. Clan festivals remain great and notable occasions. The clan system, as a study of marriage statistics will show, continues to regulate betrothal and marriage. The *samdhi* relationship, as may be seen in every song and story, continues to be of the first importance. Clan traditions still regulate funerary rites and memorial customs. Totemism is less important, but is still far from moribund. The whole complex of ideas and customs is greatly confused, but the very confusion is perhaps a sign of its vitality.

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: CHILDHOOD

304 There are not generally any taboos on a girl during the day that she is tattooed, but in Kokori I found that a girl was not allowed to go to the
● 322 ghotul the following night. This is probably a practical rule made because the girl is likely to be in some pain on that day. But when a girl does return to the ghotul after her tattooing the boys laugh at her and make the old joke about *godan* and *chodan*. 'If you could bear the pricks of *godan* (tattooing) surely you won't be afraid of the pricks of *chodan* (intercourse).' The girl naturally says that she cannot bear either. Then her boy may say, 'Look, there is pain when one is being tattooed, but in intercourse there is nothing but fun', and the girl replies, 'Well, if a mountain were to fall on me I would die, but if you fall on me I suppose I shall go on living, so you had better do what you want'. This conversation was recorded at Padbera.

314 There are a few songs about tattooing. One is in the nature of a prayer to cool the pain of the marks.

539

Arji binthi mān hamāra.	Listen to our prayer.
Us dinki bachan tumāra.	Yours is the promise we made that day.
Sujiki jhār uthāra.	Let the burning of the needles cease.

Two other songs are sung during the 'tattooing' of the *kalsa*-pot during a wedding. The first has a refrain continually repeated, *Main wāna godenda āya*, 'Mother, I want to be tattooed'.

1

God jāle godenda nuni.	If you wish, you may be, daughter.
Kon rājcho gogin nuni?	What land has the Gogin come from, daughter?
Dongarcho gogin āya.	The Gogin is from Dongar, mother.
Dudr barkjīe rale āya,	I was sweeping the yard,
Jabre wasala āya	She forced me to sit down.
Main nahin bol le āya.	I said I wouldn't, mother.
Kitro kitro mola re nuni?	How much did you pay her, daughter?
Nilo āgar dugāni wo āya.	Double the usual sum, mother.

2

Aga bagkāling dumki dai?	Where do the tattooers come from?
Raigarh da dumking dai.	From Raigarh they come.
Aga baga wāling dai?	Why have they come here?
Singār koti wāling dai.	They have come to tattoo you.
Singār koti punong dai.	They don't know how to tattoo.
Danda mola kintāling dai?	What is their charge for tattooing the arm?
Huj tāsi punong dai.	They don't know how to use the needles.
Māt mola hewom dai.	We won't pay their wages.
Māt koti hewāk dai,	If they would let us do it,
Māt singār koterom dai.	We would tattoo ourselves.[1]

[1] The Bison-horn Maria regard tattooing as a comparatively modern innovation, intended mainly as a means of attraction. The work is still done chiefly by the Maria themselves: they make needles of thorns and the colour is made by mixing the ash of pothar bark, date palm or myrabolams with mahua oil. Lamp-black is also used.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

841 In Chandabera the Muria described how once when a man had touched a menstruating woman the Gaita heated gold and touched his forehead, tongue and shoulders, sprinkled him with rice-water and water in which gold had been [628] dipped, made him drink it in the name of the Earth Mother who had been insulted, and imposed upon him a heavy fine.

This is the same penalty as that extracted from a murderer on return from jail. It does not necessarily mean that the Muria regard the two offences as morally equal, but it does suggest that they regard them as equally dangerous in the supernatural field.

A woman's husband also is subject to the strictest rules. During his wife's period, he must not dig the ground, visit his fields, either to sow or reap, thatch the roof, go to the thrashing floor, touch the grain-bins in the house, or visit the village shrines. If he visits his thrashing floor the quantity of his grain is reduced by half. But he may go to the ghotul and sleep there, though no one will take tobacco from his hands. He is allowed to fetch water and cook; indeed he generally has to do this work when his wife is barred from it, and [572] many are the ribald jests that greet a young husband caught carrying pots from the well.

841 If he is a priest, he cannot conduct any religious ceremony during his wife's period, and festivals often have to be postponed on this account. A curious 539 story from Korenda illustrates the special difficulties that may trouble a polygamous Gaita.

> At the beginning of the world, there was no god of the Wadder clansmen, though they were numerous enough, while on the other hand there was a god of the Partabi though there was only one solitary male member of the clan. He was the Gaita and he had seven wives. Since one or other of his wives was in her period all the month round, he was never able to perform his priestly duties properly. They were due to eat the new rice on Monday: on Sunday night his eldest wife began her period. They postponed the festival till Friday: but no sooner had the eldest wife bathed on Wednesday than the youngest began on Thursday. And so on, he could never keep the festival, till Dokara Deo began to trouble the Gaita and he gave both his gods, Budha Deo and Dokara Deo, to the Wadder clan.

841 How do these taboos affect the ghotul? The great majority of Muria girls experience the crisis of the menarche while they are still motiari. Only in a few villages like Malakot do the people try to get girls married before maturity. Even where they are married, the little wives may sleep in the ghotul till they are mature. At her first period, a girl-wife gives *jori-darango* or a gift of liquor to the boys and girls 'to show her companionship with them is ended'.

841 The ghotul members take a great interest in the menarche. Everybody knows all about it at once and there is a lot of joking and laughter. 'Our 522 new pot is broken, where can we go and clean it?' 'She has trodden on dirty leaves.' 'The embankment of the field is leaking.' When the chelik see the girl sitting plaintive and embarrassed behind her house or in the segregated hut they call to her, 'Have you got a baby, or what is the matter with you? Which is it, a girl or a boy?'

841 I describe elsewhere the special precautions that are taken at the menarche to ensure freedom from conception. A girl must be careful not to throw away her cups and plates for if a witch can get hold of them, she can cause her a great deal of trouble. She should, on this occasion, take these vessels and the ash in which she has cleaned her pots to the river for the Yer Kanyang or

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

sleeps at home for a day, still subject to most of her taboos. On the following day she bathes again and anoints herself, or allows her mother or sister to anoint her. In most villages she is free after the second bath. She may go again to the fields and in the evening to the ghotul. In Binjhli, however, and in a few other villages, I have found the rule that she must have three baths: the Deer Bath on the fifth day after the beginning of her period, the Lizard Bath on the sixth and the Hare Bath on the seventh. Only on the evening of the seventh day may the girl return to the ghotul. This is partly a hygienic measure—the Muria consider that a girl who finishes her bathing on her fourth day is 'as dirty as a Hindu' but one who takes three baths is 'white as a Raja'—partly a measure of birth control. The Muria share the universal Indian belief that conception is most likely to occur on the day the menstrual flow ceases.[1] This is commonly on the fourth day, and so by segregating the motiari for the dangerous period the Binjhli chelik consider that the risk of pregnancy is lessened. Even so, when a girl returns to the ghotul after her menses, she warns the boy with whom she is sleeping: 'I have just bathed my head; if there is a baby, it will be yours: will you be responsible for it?' In Binjhli the chelik told us that the girls make their lovers promise to practise *coitus interruptus* on this day, and it is the duty of the Belosa to warn the girls about it. In Markabera, however, the girls returned to the ghotul directly their flow stopped, and no special precautions were observed.

When the girl returns to the ghotul after her period the boys rag her. 'O Tiloka, the bank was broken, the water was pouring out like a river, we were tired of mending it. But now all the water has run out and the field is dry.' Or sometimes the boys say, 'Your pot had a hole in it, but today you mended it with lac'. And again, 'Who dug the hole and let the water out?' And that evening they pretend she is still unclean and cry, '*Chi chi chi*; don't touch me!' And they may say to her special chelik, 'What a lucky man you are: your rice has ripened quickly: tonight you can cut the crop'. But it is said that after the first menstruation, in those ghotul where there are ghotul mates, the chelik treats his girl with special tenderness. 'There is no end to his love for her; he doesn't let her sleep all night.' In a mysterious way, his motiari has become a woman; she is different, mature, and doubly precious.

As we would expect, the girls often suffer from dreams at this time. In Padbera they said that the Yer Kanyang who lives in the river feeds on the blood of washed-out menstrual cloths. This naiad is very lonely with no one to keep her company; so she visits the motiari in the menstruation hut and plays with them in their dreams. Because these girls dance with her all night, they are slack and weary during the day. The girls at Padbera can tell when they are about to begin their periods because they dream of the Yer Kanyang and see the river. The river-dream is everywhere prophetic of the period, especially if husband and wife or chelik and his ghotul mate dream of a river in flood. This is an important dream, for it enables the women who are favoured with it to beware of going to tabooed places where their period might begin unexpectedly. If girls dream of fire or of flying up into the sky, it is a warning that they will suffer from irregular menstruation. The end of the period is heralded by a dream of a dried-up pond.

Breach of the menstruation rules is very serious. The importance attached to them may be seen by the interesting and curious case of the goddess Pendra-wandin. This goddess, whose story is given on page 178, was originally

[1] Cf. J. J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India* (London, 1930), Vol. II, p. 366

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

585 This is the supreme moment of the marriage, the ceremony that finally asserts the union of bride and bridegroom,[1] the ultimately binding element in the long-protracted ceremonies. Bride and bridegroom were now man and wife.

Song

[539]

To manda batti dai;	There is the cattle's resting-place;
Aga padda manta dai.	There is a calf there, mother.
Padda dohi dāka dai.	I am going to tie that calf.
Sono ta dāmir dai,	There is a golden rope,
Padda poya hewo dai.	But the calf won't let me catch her.

Carrying off the Bride

Immediately the boy seized the bride, rushed her once round the booth, and carried her off to his camp, followed by a row of motiari singing enthusiastically. The bride's elder sister has the right to try to stop them: she stood in the way and was only appeased by the present of a cloth.

Ceremonial Greeting

In a few minutes the motiari came to bring the newly-married pair back to the booth for tika, the ceremonial greeting by relatives and friends. They sat down on a mat to the west of the booth, each supported by motiari, and everyone in turn put a rice-mark on their foreheads and a small present in the dish before them. As people bent down to do this, old women poured haldi over their backs and often tried to undo their clothes and smear their naked buttocks. There was much ribald laughter and a lot of fun.

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The motiari stood round singing as loudly as they could. Each relative was greeted in turn. Here is the song they used when the boy's father came for tika.

[539]

Wilor wāllor-manda buba!	The booth is shaking, father!
Mandāli horku wār-tu buba.	The branches of the booth have withered, father.
Sānde tika tāsa buba.	Do the tika, father.
Wele bara hema buba.	Don't be late, father.
Pile harau harau buba.	The birds grow hungry, father.
Karun manda paron buba.	I can't bear to be hungry, father.
Niya marri lāruna buba.	This is your darling son, father.

[1] The essential and binding part of the marriage ceremony varies in different parts. In the Punjab it consists of the *phere* or circumambulation of the sacrificial fire. In the United Provinces the young couple walk round not a fire but the marriage shed or pole. In the east of these provinces and also in Bengal and Bihar and Orissa, the binding part of the ceremony is generally the *sindurdan* or painting of the bride's forehead with vermilion. Amongst certain castes such as the Hari, the bride and bridegroom smear each other with their blood, which they obtain by pricking their fingers with a thorn. In Bombay the higher castes follow the practice of circumambulation. The lower castes sprinkle rice over the bride and bridegroom, while some pour milk or water over the joined hands of the couple. In Orissa their right hands are tied together with *kusa* grass, or their left hands when the bride is a widow. In Madras there are various ceremonies, such as making them eat from the same dish, or knotting their garments together, or pouring water over them so that it runs from the man to the woman. But the most common is for the bridegroom to tie the *tali* or necklace round the bride's neck. The Brahmin bridegroom places the bride's foot seven times on a mill-stone, a symbol of constancy.—*Census of India, 1911, Report for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa*, p. 322.

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FIG. 22. Iron lampstand placed in the centre of the marriage booth
Height 5'

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In the evening, after everyone had eaten their supper, the chelik and motiari went singing to escort the bridal pair to their new house, which had been entirely deserted for their benefit. All the other people had gone away. The chelik and motiari danced before the house for some time, the newly-married pair dancing with them. Then the little boys and girls were sent away, and the seniors caught hold of the bride and groom and pushed them into the house. Here the girl stood still while the husband was taken into a small inner room. The Sirdar spread a new mat, placed a cloth on it (they sometimes put oil on it 'to make it slippery') and made him lie down on one side. Then they pulled the girl into the room and made her lie down beside him. The boys patted them farewell, and ran out shutting the door behind them.

Outside they ran to the wall of the house, trying to peep in and hear what was going on, laughing and excited. The boys ought now to have caught a cock and taken it away, plucking its feathers all along the road, to roast it in the ghotul. But the groom's old mother had been too clever for them and had hidden all her poultry.

This cock is known variously as the *lod-kor* or 'sleeping cock', *pussi-kor* or 'semen cock', *honda-kor* or 'pubic-hairs cock', *pude-kor* or 'vagina cock', and *gel-kor* or 'copulation cock'. The usual custom, as we shall see at Nayanar, is to catch this cock, pluck the feathers going along the road, roast it in or near the ghotul or the ghotul camp, and then when everyone is asleep to push burnt feathers, entrails, bits of bone, into the mouths, ears, noses and private parts of the sleeping children—a joke that never fails to cause the greatest mirth and delight.

The theory seems to be that the cock is some sort of compensation. 'He is eating her vagina; we are eating the vagina cock.'

In Aturgaon I was told that the ghotul leaders gave a little sermon to the husband when they shut him up with his bride. 'Take this girl; she is now your property. Give us a sleeping-cock in exchange. Sleep with the girl in happiness and joy; may she bear a child within a year; it is your duty.'

The chelik of Mumjmeta told me that where boy and girl belonged to the same ghotul, and where that ghotul was one in which boys and girls paired off in some kind of permanent relationship, they had a different custom. When the marriage was over, the bride returned to the ghotul and combed the hair and massaged the limbs of her old ghotul-husband for the last time. She slept with him for an hour, and then the chelik took her to her husband and shut them up together. The cock in this

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

585 The Lagir was a very tame affair compared with what I saw at Sidhawand and Malakot. One of the boy's samdhi led the procession. He was followed by the boy, then by the girl, and then by five motiari singing. After completing the seven circuits, they tied the clothes of bride and groom together, and made them sit down for tika. When this was done a man poured water over them from the roof of the booth.[1] After this they were taken outside the house and the little rites of toilet-twig, undoing the plaits and breaking wood were performed as at Malakot.

The Tour of the Village

Now chelik and motiari escorted the bride and bridegroom round the village on a sort of farewell tour. The party first visited the ghotul, where the boy and girl threw rice and copper coins into the building. Thence they went to the Gaita's house and round the village. As the party entered each compound the house-folk came out to wash their feet, put tika on their foreheads and embraced them. The groom tied bead-necklaces round the necks of the young children of the house. The housewife gave rice and a coin or two, all of which was carefully collected in a basket by the leading motiari.

The Ghotul Camp

During a marriage the cooking has to be done out-of-doors. The ghotul is closed until all is over. At Nayanar a special camp was made in a magnificent grove of mango trees. Here the boys and girls lived and entertained their visitors. On the last night, the bride and bridegroom came at sunset, and the chelik and motiari of Nayanar sat round in a great circle. The bridegroom, who had been the Sirdar, attended by two motiari, gave necklaces and rings to every boy and girl. The rings were strung on two big *sutia*-torcs. The bead necklaces were tied together as they came from the bazaar. These gifts must have cost at least twenty rupees.

The Bedding of the Bridal Pair

Bride and bridegroom went to their house for supper; chelik and motiari had theirs in the camp and fed their many visitors. At about 11 p.m. girls and boys went to fetch the bride and her husband. They 'stole away secretly', as I was told, and stayed a little while in the camp. Then suddenly the chelik seized the girl and her husband and took them to their house. They went willingly enough at first, but when they reached the bridal chamber, though the girl entered without persuasion, the boy made a great deal of fuss. But at last they pushed him in, spread a new mat, and made them lie down together. The chelik ran out and shut the door, shouting with excitement. It was noticeable that no older person came near or showed the slightest interest.

585 This time the chelik were able to catch a cock. They took it down to
●522 the camp and made a fire in a field near by and roasted it. In the meantime the younger children went to sleep. About midnight, the boys who had bedded the married pair, and eaten the cock, came round with handfuls of offal and burnt bones and feathers. They pushed these into the mouths and privates of the sleeping girls and boys, who woke spitting and protesting but

[1] This is possibly the oldest part of the ceremony. Cain, writing in 1876, describes how a Koi woman was made to bend her head while the man leant over her and friends poured water out of a bottle-gourd. 'When the water ran off his head to that of the woman they were regarded as man and wife.'—J. Cain, 'The Bhadrachellam Taluka', *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. V (1876), p. 357.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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with a pleased recognition that the marriage at which they had so earnestly assisted had been consummated.[1]

VI. The Ghotul's Share in the Ceremony

Nāg nāgin he bihav na dondiya he salmal. The little fish are kept busy at the cobras' wedding.—Muria saying

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No wonder that there is no greater threat to a Muria boy or girl than that the ghotul members will not attend their marriage. For from beginning to end the smooth progress of the rite depends on the chelik and motiari. For a week beforehand the motiari instruct the bride in the ghotul. Chelik and motiari accompany the bridegroom when he goes to fetch his bride; they sing and dance at every point of the ceremony; the chelik go to bring in the wood for the booth and the girls direct them to its site by dancing on the spot with a mahua tree. Boys and girls go together to fetch the earth for the manda-platform, and dance round it when it is ready. The motiari attend through all the long-drawn business of anointing, they carry the bridal pair about on their backs; they bathe them, do their hair, feed them and weep with them. At the central moment of the rite, it is the drumming of the chelik and singing of the motiari that provides dignity, colour and excitement. Chelik and motiari again assist at the concluding ceremonies in the bridegroom's house, and it is the chelik who ultimately arrange the consummation of the marriage.

But these ritual duties are only the beginning of their task. They have to see to the entertainment of a large number of guests. The Sirdar arranges for wood and organizes the dances; the Belosa sees to the supply of water and leaves. She and her motiari have to make leaf-cups and plates for the male visitors (they only give leaves to women visitors, considering that they should be able to make their own). This in itself is a very considerable task, but in addition nearly all the cooking is done in the ghotul camp, and chelik and motiari have to serve food at meals. I have never seen girls work so hard as at Nayanar, where there were three weddings one after another: as the chelik were leading one husband and his bride to bed, the motiari were preparing the next bride for her fate. The girls never seemed to stop working; they were engaged day and night; yet though they began to look very tired

[1] Similar customs are observed by other tribes. In Siraiti, I watched Bison-horn Maria girls escort the bride to bed, though here the groom had to drag her into his house. Then a jovial party stole a cock and scattered its feathers along the path. The Juang boys escort the bridegroom from the *dorbar* (dormitory), sometimes tying him hand and foot, to where his bride is waiting. They make him sit with her and say, 'See, here is your house: look to it. Here is a new girl, big-breasted and young. Do not disappoint her.' The boys piss inside the house, throw rubbish over the floor, then tie the door and run away. Bride and groom must clean the house before the marriage is consummated. I have witnessed a similar ceremony in a Bondo village.

For the Kota of the Nilgiri Hills, consummation was in the nature of a test, like the custom of 'bundling' in Wales. In the morning, the girl was questioned whether she liked her husband: if she did, the marriage was confirmed, if not, it was annulled.—E. Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1907), p. 62. Here, as with the Hill Maria and other very primitive tribes, the payment of bride-price and consummation was the marriage: there was little more to it.

By Hindus of Western Bengal, the third night after the wedding is called Phulsajya, or the flower bed. 'Eavesdropping goes on freely.'—S. N. Roy, 'Stree-Achar in West Bengal', *Man in India*, Vol. VIII, p. 190. In Mysore, the Brahmins observe the beautiful *garbhādāna* ceremony, when the husband in a room filled with flowers pours fruit into his wife's lap and the priest prays 'May a male embryo enter thy womb as an arrow the quiver'.—M. N. Srinivas, op. cit., pp. 134f.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: AGE

I. Old Age and the Climacteric

888 THE place of the aged in Muria society is not unenviable. The training in the ghotul instils into the minds of boys and girls the idea of respect for older people and, for all its stress on equality, a sense of the dignity of position and achievement. This attitude remains with the children all their lives. An older man, therefore, often enjoys a very favoured position. In time he becomes a member of the village, and even of the pargana, panchayat. The system of cross-cousin marriage, so largely prevalent in the tribe, ensures that he is surrounded by a large number of relatives and dependants. Among these he gradually rises to a position in which flattering attention is paid to his judgement and it is considered essential that he should be consulted in everything to do with the welfare of the tribe, the clan, the family, and the ghotul.

887 Nor is there any loss of the variety and colour of life. He still occasionally visits the scene of his youthful happiness and, if he is wise and tactful, the children will consult him about their affairs. If he has the art of music or story-telling he will command absorbed attention. He still goes to the great tribal festivals and the commercial Marhai in the larger villages. At these, if he is a Siraha he will dance and beat his drum as lustily as any chelik; he will meet scores of old friends and drink with them. At marriages, which he invariably attends, he has a special licence to play practical jokes and to indulge the coarsest behaviour. There are certain to be present many men and women who stand to him in the 'joking relationship', and a marriage is the stage whereon the Table of Relationship comes to dramatic life. Nobody is likely to think less of him for his pranks. Indeed the antics of the old men are an enlivening and picturesque feature of most marriages. [522]

888 But, of course, the varied scenes he has witnessed and the bereavements he has suffered generally tend to make the old Muria at other times somewhat sad and meditative. Disease sometimes hampers his movements, though many old Muria are remarkably hale and hearty. A proverb runs: 'When a child he plays; when a boy he displays his beauty; in age his head shakes and he meditates.' This comparison of youth and age is a favourite one among the Muria. 'The baby has no hair; the youth dresses it; the old man's curls behind.'

887 The old village woman, Muria, Gond, Pardhan or Baiga, deserves the world's most profound respect. Her wrinkled face and bent indomitable form, which is so familiar a sight in every Muria village, is the symbol of the courage, devotion and the will to persevere characteristic of her race. Upon her falls the heavy burden of the work of an ever-growing household. She is expected to be present and to help at the confinements of every one of her descendants. She constantly has to care for her grandchildren and may even be called on to provide milk for them from her withered breasts. Should she be relieved of the burden of a family, her lot is no less arduous, and I have often seen the pitiful little huts in which some lonely, childless widow spends the evening of her days.

But the old woman's lot is not unbroken drudgery. The scheme and pattern of Muria life is well devised to break up the monotony of village existence with bright and vivid colours and gay bursts of song. The old woman too

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887 goes to the market and attends the festivals, though there is not so much for her in these as for the men. But her real hour of happiness is at a marriage. Here she may lay aside restraint and recapture the abandon of youth. Now she may drink heavily and for a few hours in blissful intoxication free herself of inhibitions and forget all that is tiresome and weary in her life. If the older men enliven the marriage scene with their buffoonery, the older women divert it with their obscenity. There is nothing that they may not say, little they may not do. Their songs and their dance movements are outrageous and never fail to rouse laughter in the crowd.

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888 In a very few cases Muria women grow riggish in old age. They adorn themselves with many ornaments and wear bright-coloured saris. This behaviour is not approved.

You are an old woman,
Forget your dances.
You are an old woman,
Yet on your buttocks is a tiny cloth
And flowers are in your hair.

Although there is a rule that women should never use their ghotul titles after marriage, when a group of old women who have grown up together in the same ghotul meet in later life, they usually use the old names in order to awaken happy memories of the past. I am told that then they exchange reminiscences through half the night and that such times are among the happiest of their lives.

886 As elsewhere in aboriginal India, the climacteric does not appear to be dreaded or even to be specially noticed. In India, women are old at 45 and they greet the cessation of the menstrual period with relief that they are now saved from its embarrassments. I have not been able to find any myth about the climacteric; there does not seem to be any rule about it or any desire to avert it. It is a purely natural phenomenon. 'The stream that flowed so long is dry', 'the old tree has begun to wither'. Some people believe that the tree withers because 'no one goes to an old woman,[1] so her vagina has no grain to eat; no rain falls in her stream, so how can it flow?'

II. Death and the Ghotul

761 883 The ghotul is a place of separations. But when a chelik or motiari dies there is a special feeling of sorrow, a sense of outrage, the conviction that something exceptional and abnormal has occurred. Sometimes the ghotul is closed for three days; where it is not closed the children gather sadly and there is no singing and there should be no intimacies. When older people die the dormitory is not closed. 'The ghotul is the *Dinda-mahāl*, the Palace of the Unmarried. As the Raja's Palace is not shut when people die in the town, neither is ours. But if two or three of the chelik and motiari die, then we shut it.' At Dongrigura, they said that when a chelik died, the motiari wept and next day initiated one of the younger boys and gave him the dead chelik's title, so that there might be no gap in their fellowship. When the Subedar died, they made his little brother Subedar next day and gave him as 'husband' to the Subedarin, his *ange*, or elder brother's 'widow'.

The death of a chelik or motiari is always abnormal. The death of a little child or of a child in the womb is no less unnatural. 'Just as in a field, rice

[1] A rather cynical proverb runs: 'How disgusted is a man who eats stale food in the morning and goes to bed with an old woman at night.'

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Angār mute rāni ra.	Angar Mute is the Rani.
Yer miyāṛ hilandu ra.	Weeping, she is bathing in the water.
Jhāro jhāro hilandu ra.	As she weeps the tears fall.
Pitāmaro dhoti ra!	O her silken cloth!
Dhoti tune kurandu ra.	She looks at her cloth.
Tāna dudong ātsko ra?	How can we describe her breasts?
Māhka kāyāng dudo ra.	Her breasts are as the bel fruit.
Ghātum tikeda wāndung ra.	From the bathing-place she is coming home.
Lonc tike kandung ra	In the house
Mul gatke māta ra	There are so many relatives
Suju buju hile ra.	That we cannot count them.

The rest of the song describes Angar Mute's court, to which comes the Pargana Manjhi with small legs, his spear over his shoulder, a big-bellied Kotwar and many other officials. The Manjhi delivers judgement, giving a hundred rupees to the Raja and only a pair of bullocks for the Muria. 'One of the bullocks had no tail, the other had no horns.' Then the chelik and motiari who have escorted the corpse to the burial ground are described. There are sixty boys led by Kosi Leyur and sixty girls led by Gara Karre Mode, the Belosa of the ghotul, whose vagina is sixteen cubits long and whose pubic hairs are five cubits long. 'A jungle boar could roll in her vagina.' The boys break her bangles and push the pieces into her navel with a *jharar jharar* noise.

All this, which seems merely coarse to us, is exceedingly amusing to the Muria; the song is really a comic effort intended to relieve the tension of the funeral now that the main rites are done.

VI. Divining the Cause of Death

It is always important at a funeral to discover the cause of so monstrous and unnatural a thing as death. At Binjhli, when magic is suspected, they halt the bier before it reaches the burial ground and the Siraha medium recites a string of names of suspected persons. When the name of the guilty man is mentioned, the bier moves forward violently of its own accord. This method, which resembles the use of an Anga clan-god for divination, is common throughout the State, and Grigson has recorded a similar, though more elaborate, rite in use among the Hill Maria.[1]

At Kehalakot, the Muria remove some locks of the dead man's hair and a little earth from beneath his head. They make a small flag-pole with the hair and the earth and a saja leaf stuck on an ebony stick. They take this to the jungle and a boy holds it while the Siraha recites the names of any suspected causes or people. When the right word is uttered, the flag is said to quiver. At Kokori the villagers go to the boundary and put five heaps of rice in a row, one for Mahapurub, one for witchcraft, one for Mother Earth, one for the ancestors of the house, and one for any local godling who may have been troublesome. The people sit some distance away, and spend the time having their hair done by their relatives-in-law. Presently a crow flies down and pecks at one or other of the piles of rice, thus revealing the cause of death.

The *thembukri* divination is done with chickens on the second or third day after death. One chicken is taken from the house of the dead and one from

[1] Grigson, op. cit., p. 272.

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In many ghotul a sister may comb and massage a brother, but in Kabonga there was a rule that she must not salute him with Johar nor comb his hair.

Many coarse jokes are made about the relation of brothers and sisters when everyone is drunk at a marriage. There are many obscene songs about it, for it is regarded as a licensed subject for humour. As in other societies, however, it is probable that such humour only exists against a background of very strict propriety. The suggestion that a brother is sleeping with his sister is amusing simply because he never does.

Generally it is said that brothers and sisters live together very happily. When they do quarrel a boy may say to his sister: 'You *potsa* (big-bellied one), you *chipri* (you've got dirty eyes), *saladri* (murderess).' It is said that a girl on her marriage remembers these delightful animosities and weeps bitterly saying, 'No one will be able to quarrel with me so sweetly in future'. The brother may threaten to turn his sister out of the house, but she has the ready retort available that 'in any case I am not going to stay in your house, I can easily make a living somewhere else'.

III

How far is the rule of fidelity to a single partner kept? This is a matter on which there can be no possible statistical evidence; one can only give a general impression and quote a few examples. The temptation to break the rules must be very great. Ghotul routine aims at stimulating the sexual passion. The boys and girls live in the closest contact, and enjoy sexual intimacy in one another's presence. Certain relatives, such as the younger brother, have traditional privileges. The chelik are often absent in the fields, and their motiari sleep accessible and alone. In every 'memoir' that I have collected, the narrator has described how he or she evaded the ghotul rules.

From these memoirs I will give a few quotations. My first is from the experiences of Budhu, a Poyami of Kanera in the Sonawal Pargana of Kondagaon, in a *jodidār* ghotul forty years ago.

> In those days there were about twelve boys and ten girls in the ghotul, and a boy used to sleep with his partner until his marriage unless he changed his name. I was married to the Malko and loved her very much. I was then Sepahi. But after two years, I was made Kotwar, and I had to leave Malko and sleep with the Kotwarin, for that was the rule. Yet my thoughts were always for Malko, and at night when everyone was asleep I would leave the mat where I was sleeping with Kotwarin and creep over to Malko to make love to her.
>
> My parents knew nothing of this, yet to my delight they told me one day that they were going to arrange my marriage with Malko, which was just what we wanted.
>
> A few days after this good news, I went to Sonawal for work and stayed there for a week. During this time I slept in the Sonawal ghotul with the Jamadarin. On the last night this girl took the comb from my hair as a keepsake. From Sonawal I went to Kokori and danced in the ghotul there. One of the motiari fell in love with me and constantly offered me tobacco. After a few days I started home, but three of the girls met me in the jungle and begged me to stay with them, but I had to go home.
>
> Soon afterwards I was married to Malko and we were very happy. We have always done everything together and have never quarrelled.

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PERSONAL ADORNMENT AND POSSESSIONS

These mats are kept at home and boys or girls bring them rolled up under their arms at night to the ghotul. In some villages this is the special duty of the girls. When they arrive they go round saluting the boys and presenting them with their mats. This is known as *Masni-johar*.

Fig. 96. The wooden dab used for making a masni-mat
Length 1' 10"

The mat is very definitely a sexual symbol and many ribald jokes are connected with it. The new mat given to a bridegroom at his marriage is generally smeared with oil 'to make it slippery'. Once when I was sitting down in the village of Amgaon a chelik brought me a *masni* but an old man said, 'Don't sit on it, it is covered with semen', and everyone thought it very amusing. It is supposed to be a great honour to be given a mat by the chelik, probably just because it is a symbol of so much excitement and romance.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

OTHER RECREATIONS

I. Muria Humour

522 THE humour of the Muria is probably more fully developed than that of any other tribe in Bastar or the Central Provinces; the ghotul is a natural school of wit; the constant association of young people forces them to devise many forms of entertainment. The first and most elementary expression of Muria humour is plain buffoonery. They love throwing dirty water at each other, sprinkling people with red ants, creeping up behind someone and clasping muddy hands round his face. In Nayanar, the chelik had bamboo squirts (Fig. 21) with which they projected streams of water at the motiari. At a marriage, old men and women get great fun out of pouring haldi-water over the buttocks of their relatives as they bend down to greet the bridal pair. They enjoy poking each other's genitals and catching hold of them, and if anyone dances naked, especially if this is in front of forbidden relatives, they laugh till they can hardly stand. The reader will note that here it is the social rather than the sexual aspect of the ribaldry that appeals; it is the notion of doing something unusual and improper before people in whose presence the strictest decorum is usually practised. Jokes about incest are funny because it is almost unknown in Muria society; it is possible to be humorous about adultery simply because it is so rare. The obscene jokes of a Muria marriage do not by any means imply a general standard of obscenity; indeed they suggest the opposite. It is in the most rigidly correct middle classes of English society that the vulgar postcard has its widest circulation, for it is the sense of contrast and incongruity that is amusing. In this connexion George Orwell has recently drawn attention to the difference between obscenity and immorality. The obscene is based on the implication that 'marriage is something profoundly exciting and important, the biggest event in the average human being's life. So also with jokes about nagging wives and tyrannous mothers-in-law. They do at least imply a stable society in which marriage is indissoluble and family loyalty taken for granted... A dirty joke is not, of course, a serious attack upon morality, but it is a sort of mental rebellion, a momentary wish that things were otherwise.'[1] So, in this sense Muria jokes are obscene, but they are not immoral.

522 292 The Muria get a great deal of fun out of dressing up. At weddings, especially at the critical moment of the Lagir, many people—both young and old—appear in fantastic array. One man performs as a giant; another has an enormous rope penis; a third is covered with ash and goes about imitating the Siraha-mediums. In Malakot the villagers were highly amused at the antics of an old man dressed in a bear-skin who was led about by his keeper, himself swathed from head to foot in paddy-rope. The village headman, ordinarily the soberest of beings, appeared riding a hobby-horse and flourishing an umbrella. At Sidhawand there was a 'sadhu' with a long tail and an ash-covered fisherman who burlesqued Muria fishing methods. Masks are sometimes worn, especially during the Pus Kolang and Chherta expeditions. In Kachora two boys wearing gourd masks played at man and wife, the wife causing great mirth by a pair of artificial breasts. In Phulpar a chelik wore an artificial beard of squirrel's hair which he combed before a mirror. In

[1] G. Orwell, 'The Art of Donald McGill', *Horizon*, Vol. IV (1941), pp. 132ff.

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522 292 Gorma, the Muria Atpariha dressed up as a straw man, with a whitened face and beard of bear's fur. He carried about an enormous bow and a wooden spade as arrow. Even an old solar topi is thought amusing—when it is on a chelik's head. The desire to create a sharp dramatic contrast prompted a Muria at Masora to dance with a dog in his arms (Plate CXLIII).

522 But beside a delight in sudden contrasts, the Muria have a special attraction to the grotesque. In one story a girl with a huge umbilical stump buries herself in the bed of a river, but the stump sticks up and a bullock cart is caught on it. The first motiari had a vagina so large that a wild boar could roll about in it. She looked like a sack of salt from Nandgaon. In a song, a boy has a penis as long as a cucumber and testicles as fat as pumpkins.

In Gorma I saw an extraordinary dance, when the performer, distorting his face and body, pranced about the ghotul like an obscene bird. With his hand he poked his bottom, privates, chest and head, smelt his supposedly soiled and stinking fingers, then pushed them in the faces of the onlookers. It was done so well that you forgot the indecency in a sort of horror as at some perverted creation of the mind. In the same category are the 'panthers' or 'lizards' that so often appear at a dance or wedding. A boy covers himself with a blanket, and with an ingenious arrangement of twigs makes himself a head and beak which opens and shuts. He then crawls about in what I can only call an abominable manner which never fails to give a thrill of fear.

More purely humorous was a great bird made at Phauda. A chelik lay on the ground with his hands stretched out before him. The others covered his body with a blanket and his hands with cloth. They decorated the cloth-covered hands with ornaments, gave them a beak and ears, and produced a grotesque bird. Then the boy by moving his hands made the bird peck about very divertingly (Plate CXLVII).

If we turn to verbal wit we find a similar tendency. In the songs are references to moustached peacocks[1] and tusked hares.

[539] On Kachgudgud Hill is a hare, chelik.
Its teeth are as long as a chopper, chelik.
Its moustache is like jungle grass, chelik.
Its hairs like bamboo shavings, chelik.

In the Ghotul Pata there are many such diverting descriptions. How excellent, for example, is the account of the Kotwar who is fed on gruel twelve years old and full of frogs and lizards[2]

[539] His moustaches said *suyi suyi* as he drank,
His throat cried *gurgur gurgur*.
As he ate the frogs and lizards, his mouth went *pilos pilos*.

The descriptions of the chelik and motiari at Siri Somni's marriage and of the treatment given to Bai Dursal Rani by the Manjhi[3] are funny even to Western ears.

[1] Compare the Uraon poem:

The cobra comes
With his hood raised
Asking alms.
The heron comes
With his neck straight
Twirling his moustaches. (Archer, *op. cit.*, p. 122.)

[2] The antics of the village Kotwar are a favourite theme of the Gond and Pardhan story-teller in the Central Provinces. See my *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*, pp. 281., 108f., and Elwin and Hivale, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* (Bombay, 1944), pp. 372ff.

[3] See p. 608.

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OTHER RECREATIONS

II. A Test of Wit

The posing of riddles is a fairly popular form of amusement in the ghotul. It sharpens the wits and is often very amusing, the sharp and unexpected contrasts between description and meaning often surprising the listeners into a sudden burst of laughter. Many riddles have both a manifest and latent meaning, the latter usually sexual. Riddles illustrating various sociological points will be found throughout the book, but I will add another 150 here.

In Gondi, the riddles are usually in what may be called prose. Rhyme is very uncommon and even assonance and punning are rare. The following are hardly typical:

Uiu tutu bhui la tutu.
The horn comes out of the ground.
A bamboo shoot.

Uding uding inta, dāy dāy inta.
Say sit sit and say go go.
Sand in which you get stuck.

Porro kīre, adi mond.
Threshing-floor above, its pole below.
An umbrella.

Konda udinta kīsra witinta.
The bullock sits, the tethering cord runs away.
A pumpkin.

The usual Gondi riddle has no special form.

Undi urpādum nur nei kushintāng.
A hundred dogs bite one lizard.
The rafter of a house.

Tāmur iruura lokku jotāy manta, mati warro warrona lote koriyor.
The brothers live together, but never enter each other's house.
A pair of shoes.

It is in the Halbi riddles, which are now almost as common as those in the original Gondi, that we find rhyme and assonance. The Halbi riddle is spoken very fast with an emphasis on a central word.

Sukko rukh thai kare;
Burga bhālu hai kare.
The dry tree says *thai*;
The old bear says *hai*.
A gun.

Kurlu dongri mārlu jhāli;
Ek thanī pachās pāli.
Cut shrubs on the hill of kurlu trees;
There are fifty rafters on one pole.
An umbrella.

Ek garkcho murkiyai,
Bāru garkcho pānikhai.
The cow with the broken horn from one house drinks the water of twelve houses.
A fish-hook.

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Chiringia bāja;
Natrāl pāga.
It makes a noise like a drum;
It has a red turban.

A sarus crane.

Alliteration is also used.

Phulle phulese,
Jharte jharese.
Flower blossoms
And drops soon.

A bazaar.

Some riddles end with a taunt or challenge, a device which is generally only used when an extra line is needed to complete the rhyme.

Jhil mili tarai
Rai ratan bāri.
Ye dhandha ke nijānbe,
Baile cho nāk ke kāti.

The star sparkles
The fence is beautiful.
If you don't answer this riddle,
Your wife's nose will be cut off.

A mirror.

Karkas pāna rupas dheti
Dhandha ko nahi jānbe ghasnin ke beti.
Rough leaves, silver stem.
If you don't know this riddle,
You're a Ghasnin's daughter.

Sugar-cane.

There's a wall round the lake.
If you can't answer this, you'll be my bond-servant.

A mirror.

The stick is straight,
At the top are bells.
If you don't know what this is,
An ant will bite your bottom.

Male genitalia.

A few rather curious riddles take the form of imaginary conversations. A thorn addresses a man about to step on it. 'I see you, but you don't see me.' A householder speaks to a leaf blown in by the wind. 'Where have you come from, old chap, making your camp on my doorstep?' A flooded river as it rushes on speaks to the reeds growing in its bed, 'You stay where you are; I am going to Ratanpur'.

The riddles posed in the ghotul may not all be of Muria origin, but at least the Muria can enjoy them and see their point. Even if a man cannot make that kind of joke himself, he may claim to have some sense of humour if he enjoys reading Thurber. Many of the descriptions set out in riddle form are really witty and amusing even to the sophisticated Western mind. The riddles too gain their effect from bizarre contrasts. An axe is described as 'a roasted pig jumping from tree to tree'. Anyone who has seen a Muria roasting a pig, holding the headless creature over the fire, will appreciate the

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522 524 wit of that; it is even better than the Uraon riddle on the same theme—'A parrot playing on the dry stump of a tree'.[1] Another pig riddle is about a needle and thread which is described as 'a little pig with a cord in its bottom' instead of where the pig's cord ought to be, in its nose.

And what an admirable description of palm wine! 'Outside how quiet—but in the belly how it thunders!' The stomach is always amusing; as with us there is the connotation of something gross and amiable, the fat man keen on his food. A drum is 'a fly buzzing in an elephant's belly'—stressing the contrast of the huge belly and the little fly. A winnowing-fan is the 'man with buttocks in front and stomach behind'—the same kind of absurdity as when a man puts on his trousers back to front.

An oil-press is 'the hunchback bear that pisses all round'. A gun is riddled thus: 'Tap the dry tree and the old bear says *Hai*.' This seems to me amusing in a quiet and bucolic way, but—to make one more comparison with the Uraon riddles—their description of a gun as 'a ghost speaking from a dry piece of wood'[2] is uncanny and chills the heart. It probably has more effect on a European reader: he remembers a thousand guns and the ghosts that they have made.

There is an excellent description of a letter:

> A little wood-pigeon has a fat tummy:
> Where are you off to, pigeon?

Some other witty riddles are these:

> The basket broke and out came the tiger.—*A pig excreting.*
> Always turns up punctually to work.—*The sun.*
> A black cow with a thousand feet jumps onto the Raja's food.—*A fly.*

You can almost see those dirty feet landing in the middle of the plate, scattering the royal food across the table, the face of the indignant Raja.

Two riddles expose the limitations of the human frame: 'You can see the distant hill, but not the one on top of you.' That is your own head. And 'your own back' is the answer to 'You can see all the world save one little plot of land'.

Two smutty jokes: 'The creature has a penis above and a vagina below.' *The backside of a cow.* 'He has his penis in his mouth.' *A sahib smoking a cigar.* These with their vague half-remembered associations to Havelock Ellis are probably more amusing to a European than to a Muria.

522 Really witty smut is not very common; I have been through many Paske Pata, the marriage songs which hurl rhythmic abuse at all the relations of the bridal pair, but I have found nothing that seems funny to me. Yet it obviously seems funny to the Muria, for at each new obscenity they shout with triumphant laughter. Why should it be so amusing to say 'I'll bed your sister', 'I'll copulate with your mother', 'I'll carry off my uncle's daughter'? The reason again is not sexual, but social; it is due to the absorbed attention which all Muria give to family relationships. You can always raise a laugh from a Muria audience by a reference to the Table of Affinity.

As we see elsewhere, certain relations stand in a *hassi hi ndi*, a joking relation, to one another. The time-honoured jokes are brought out again and again and always get a good hand. A man says to his *bhaicha*: 'Why not come and live on us? You can't get a living in your own house. Then I'll be able to carry off your daughter, I've always wanted to marry her.' A chelik laughs at his *malma*, mother's brother. 'I'm going to have your daughter', he says.

[1] Archer, op. cit., p. 180. [2] Ibid., p. 180.

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522 'Well', says his uncle. 'She *is* being kept for you.' 'No, I want a larger choice of girls. But I'll just carry her off for a few days.' And two samdhi joke with each other. 'I know you sleep every night with your sister', says one. 'Yes, and we all know whom *you* sleep with.' And so on interminably.

X883 522 In the ghotul, children tease each other but they are not allowed to go too far. A chelik who repeats a joke until it becomes cruel is fined. At a motiari's first menstruation, everybody is pleased and amused. 'Today the embankment of the field is broken.' 'We'd better call a lot of coolies to mend the leaking tank.' When the girl returns to the ghotul after her period of seclusion, the boys say, 'So the coolies have stopped the hole in the field. Don't let anyone make a new hole tonight'.

In the Binjhli ghotul one day the Silo, an older girl, was forcibly 'married' to the smallest boy there—this is a ghotul in which formal 'marriages' are not allowed, so the game had the double value of incongruity both in age and custom. The children performed all the marriage ceremonies, pretended to drink a lot of liquor, imitated the antics of their drunken elders, and finally dragged the pair off to bed together. But the little boy ran away. Then they pretended that a child was born, and a bundle was handed round the ghotul, the boys giving it their 'breasts' to suck. At last the little 'father' had to take it, but he threw it away crying, 'It doesn't look like me; she's been going to other boys'.

When older men come to the ghotul, there is a lot of coarse jesting about their relations with their wives. I remember the headman of Kuntpadar who is almost completely bald had himself massaged by the Belosa and said, 'How is she going to pull her comb through my few hairs' and 'If my old woman were to see me now, I wonder what she'd say. It's a good rule that wives mustn't come to the ghotul'.

X883 522 551 A boy or girl with any deformity is laughed at and is given a nickname which will remind him of it. Some of these names are themselves witty—Dhol, fat as a drum; Banga, who was a stupid baby; Pota with a big stomach; Salaidu who never does what he is told but always something else; Cholu who never stops talking, and Marin—who is like a Maria, 'never takes any notice of anyone and when you want to beat him gets out his bow and arrows'. A boy at Binjhli, of whom it is said that he cannot see a motiari without saying something to make her laugh, is called Jhola. In the same ghotul a big overgrown fellow was ragged mercilessly. He was *dokara* (old man) by day and *bokara* (goat) at night. 'All the land of the ghotul has been broken up by his great ploughshare.'

X883 522 Shamrao Hivale heard a chelik and motiari talking to each other in the ghotul; each sentence sent them into fits of laughter. 'What have you got?' said the boy. 'No, tell me first what you've got.' 'Well, I've one root and two onions.' 'And I', said the girl, 'have two sweet mangoes and a basket for your root.' 'Yes, but what am I to do with the onions?' 'They can stay out in the compound.' 'But at least put the root in your basket.'

Straightforward sexual jokes, with no social reference, about copulation and the private parts are common enough. For the Baihar Karsana (Mad Game), at Kanhargaon, boys dress up as a lunatic with his wife and child. He has a huge penis, 'she' grotesque breasts. Every time he touches them, he gets burnt; he tries to pull out her pubic hairs, and gets burnt again. The wife gives birth to a child, a cloth doll, the husband suckles it—but I need not particularize the endless buffoonery. The copulation of animals may be imitated; this is done even in the public—and very sacred—Pus Kolang dances. Excretory jokes are rare, I think, though boys laugh at girls

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if they catch them relieving themselves. There is nothing very subtle or witty in any of this. In fact, since there are so few taboos on sex in the ghotul it is rather difficult to be funny about it.

It is worth noting that even the gods are not above a bit of horse-play. In Adnar I watched the young deity Chelik Sai, who was after all a chelik and conveniently represented by a long erect pole, amusing himself with a group of motiari. In the hands of his medium he pranced about, poking himself at the girls, chasing them about, pretending to catch them and ride upon them. Another medium carrying an iron chain amused everybody by his absurd gestures; he would dance round and round a line of girls, bend down and peer up into their faces in the most ridiculous manner. In Metawand, one of the horses of the gods was chased about the field, and roars of laughter greeted the divine sport.

A common type of funny story finds its humour in an absurd and indecorous situation. In Metawand I was told the tale of the woman who is going along the road in the rains. Some of the mud gets into her vagina and when she stops at a stream to wash it, a crab catches hold of her clitoris. She calls a man to help, but hard as he pulls at the crab he cannot make it let go. At last he tries to bite it off, but it gets hold of his nose with its spare claw, and there they all are—on a public highway, the respectable Muria with his nose stuck in the vagina of an unknown woman. After a while along comes a Lohar and gets the crab out with his tongs, but only on condition that the woman will give him 'tobacco' whenever he wants it. Some days later he comes to her house to claim his reward. She is busy cooking and asks him to lie down on a cot until she is ready. He lies on his face, but he is so excited that his erect penis goes through the strings of the cot and protrudes below. A cat thinking it a bit of meat, catches it. The situation is now reversed. The woman comes out and refuses to release the Lohar unless he declares her quit of her debt to him.

Another tale, from Aturgaon, which is known in Bengal and to the Uraon, but is given an entirely fresh and vivid turn by the Muria, again gets its effect from the sticking together, in public and deplorable juxtaposition, of incongruous things: a man and woman cannot get apart, a midwife finds her hands stuck to her head and nothing on below, a magician discovers a bullock's horns sticking to his bottom. Personally I think this tale is really funny, even in its bare and literal form.

There was a Muria Raja with one son. In his village was a barber who also had an only son. The two boys were always playing together, they would never do their work. The Raja used to tell his son to go and plough in the fields, but he always refused. At last the Raja got very angry and turned him out. The boy put on his ornaments and took a bag of money, mounted his horse and rode away. As he went he met the barber's son and told him that he was going to his future father-in-law's house. The barber's son said he would go with him.

Presently, the Raja's son said he wanted to relieve himself. There were no leafy trees at hand so the barber's son said, 'You had better take off your clothes and ornaments and go to the jungle in your loin cloth'. While the Raja's son was away, the barber's son put on his clothes and ornaments and rode off on the horse.

When the boy returned and found his things gone, he wept so loudly that Bara Deo heard his crying and came to him in the shape of an old

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man. 'Go to your father-in-law's house', he said, 'as a servant. I will give you this charm, that whatever you say will happen.' So the boy went and took a job as servant. He found the barber's son living there in his stead, wearing his ornaments and dressed in his clothes. That night the barber's son went in to the father-in-law's daughter. The Raja's son outside the door exclaimed, 'As they are, let them be; without my order let them not separate'.

So there they were, stuck together and all night they struggled to get free. In the morning the members of the family sent their servant, the Raja's son, for a midwife to cut the unhappy pair apart.

Now as the Raja's son was bringing the midwife to the house, they had to cross a flooded river and both of them stripped themselves naked. The Raja's son said, 'Put your clothes on your head, hold them there with your two hands and so cross the river'. As the woman approached the opposite bank, the boy said, 'As you are, so remain; without my order you may not change'. So the midwife came naked, holding her hands to her head, and weeping and, of course, she could do nothing.

So then they sent the Raja's son to fetch a magician. As they were coming along together, the magician went to relieve himself but there was no water near at hand. But there was a dead bullock's head with two horns and he wiped himself on it. As he was doing so, the Raja's son exclaimed, 'As you are, so remain; without my order you may not change'. And so the magician came to the house with the bullock's head and its horns sticking to his bottom. When he saw him, the father-in-law was so frightened that he said, 'Whoever can solve this trouble, shall have my daughter and all my money'. Then the Raja's son told him what had happened and his father-in-law said, 'If you can make all well again, I will believe you, and you shall have my daughter'. At this the Raja's son removed his charms and the horns dropped from the magician's bottom, the woman covered her vagina with her hands, and the girl released the barber's son from his captivity.

Then the father-in-law killed that barber's son and married the Raja's son to his daughter.

From that day we never use barbers to cut our hair. We never use water when we relieve ourselves. If the omens are wrong we never go to betroth a girl, and we think it no fault if the unmarried sleep together.[1]

[1] In a Bengali tale, which we probably possess in a somewhat bowdlerised version, the stick of a cowherd gets stuck to his hand, the winnowing-basket of a maid servant gets stuck to her hand, a platter sticks to the hand of a Rani, and a Raja and his courtiers get stuck to their seats and have to be sawn off.—S. C. Mitra, 'A Bengali Cumulative Folk-tale of the Old Dame Lousy Type' in *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, July 1922. Other parallels may be found in W. McCulloch, *Bengali Household Tales* (London, 1912), pp. 212ff., where the Prince makes the impostor's mouth stick to his hookah and the priest's wife stick to his shoulders as he carries her across a stream, and in A. Grignard, *Haka's Oraon Folk-lore* (Patna, 1931), pp. 46ff., where the Prince declares, 'If this fellow be her god-given bridegroom, you stools stick to the rears of these sorcerers' and of course they do. I recorded yet another version in a Juang village in Pal Lahara State. In this a goatherd who suffers from impotence has the compensatory power of sticking things together. He attaches a girl's buttocks to a rock while she is bathing and a pot to an old man's behind. There is a ribald scene where a bride and bridegroom are fixed together and the whole family tries to pull them apart. An inquisitive Brahmin bends over the place of conjunction and gets his moustache caught there. These stories are of the same order as the Toda-Kota motif of the dog becoming stuck in copulation.—M. B. Emeneau, 'Some Origin Stories', *JAOS*, Vol. LXIII, p. 163.

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he is sometimes known as the Gahania[1]—the boy who is in pawn. Elsewhere in India he is called Ghar-jamai, Ghardi-jawae, Ghar-damānd and Khāna-damānd—these expressions mean 'house-son-in-law'.

The Lamhadz is betrothed to his girl in the ordinary way, and then comes to live in her father's house, where he is treated as one of the family. If he has been living hitherto in a different village, he has to leave the ghotul there and join the ghotul of which his future bride is a motiari. He will get a ghotul-wife or a temporary partner as the case may be and he will live with her at the same time that he serves for his betrothed. We thus have the interesting situation that if a Lamhada boy comes from another village to a place where there is a *jodidār* ghotul, he gets two new girls—one his betrothed with whom he should have nothing to do, and the other his ghotul-wife with whom he will regularly cohabit.

The strongly equalitarian character of the Muria saves the institution of serving-marriage from certain obvious disadvantages. A boy is not looked down upon because he has no money. The capital that he brings to his new home is the strength of his arms, his industry and his enterprise. It is true that the hardest tasks are often given him, but these are to test his capacity and willingness to work rather than any token that he is regarded as inferior. His status in the ghotul is as good as any, and he is just as likely to become Sirdar or Kotwar as the son of the house where he is serving.

[522] But the Lamhada is a licensed subject for jesting. His close proximity to his future wife—in the same house, a definitely more 'risky' connexion than the closely disciplined relationship in the ghotul; his relations with his mother-in-law and other forbidden persons begun even before marriage; the heavy tasks and tests that are laid upon him; these are subjects for endless comment and amusement.

In Dugabangal, the boys and girls sing a *Lām dāyna pāta*, a song about a boy going as a Lamhada.

Say Lamka Lamka, say son-in-law.
Hard is the work of the Lamka boy
What is the plough made of?
The plough is made of the kosom tree.
What is the yoke made of?
The yoke is made of the siuna tree.
What is the pole made of?
The pole is made of the tinsa tree.
The bullocks are uncle and nephew;
The field is the field of the frogs;
The rice is black as the eyes of a queen.

In a Chitkul song of the Amoli ghotul, a girl is represented as chiding her father for not getting her married.

I am growing up like the beans in the garden,
Yet no one comes to marry me.
I am seven years mature, my father,
I am nearly old as you.
Yet if a boy comes to be Lamhada,
You show him the axe that weighs twelve *gana*;
You show him the basket of two hundred bamboos;
And he goes to find another girl.

[1] In Betul Gondi he is called Lamjanal and the girl he is betrothed to is Lamjana-watar.—Trench, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 104.

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Chelik of Nayanar squirts water at a motiari

Old people throw mud at each other at a Malakot wedding

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